

# Jeffrey H. Brodsky oral history collection 15438392

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Oral History Archives at Columbia

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# **Summary Information**

<b>Repository:</b>	Oral History Archives at Columbia
Creator:	Brodsky, Jeffrey H., 1974-2023
Title:	Jeffrey H. Brodsky oral history collection
ID:	15438392
Date [inclusive]:	1991-2021
Date [bulk]:	2000-2012
Physical Description:	237 Gigabytes
Physical Description:	1704 Files
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	A born-digital work product collection of former journalist, oral historian, and OHMA grad Jeffrey Brodsky. Collection contains personal materials, audio files of a radio show, photographs and video of red carpet interviews, and materials related to Brodsky's time as a student in the Oral History Master's program at Columbia, including interviews (some partial, some complete) and related materials to his thesis title "My First Campaign," an exploration of political candidates' first political campaign.

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# **Biographical / Historical**

Jeffrey Brodsky was born January 8, 1974 in Manchester, New Hampshire, the son of Howard and Kathy Brodsky. Howard Brodsky is co-founder and chairman of CCA Global Partners. Kathy Brodsky is a children's book author, poet, and clinical social worker.

Brodsky showed an interest in journalism during high school, where he was co-editor-in-chief of the Manchester High School Central newspaper, *The Little Green* and hosted a weekly radio show called *Spotlight*. He held several internships at news outlets, including the *Chicago Sun-Times*, CNN, *USA Today*, and the State News Service. At 18, Brodsky founded the

National Scholastic Surveys, a polling and research firm dedicated to gathering the opinions of high school and college students.

He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Washington University in St. Louis. After graduation he worked as an independent journalist, often for red carpet or political events. His work has been published in the *Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times*, Associated Press, *USA Today*, Bloomberg News and the *Wall Street Journal*. He has also made appearances on CNN, C-Span, and National Public Radio.

In 2008, he was admitted into the first cohort of the Oral History Master's program (OHMA) at Columbia University, an interdisciplinary degree program training students in oral history methodology and theory. For his thesis, titled "My First Campaign," Brodsky interviewed dozens of current and former politicians about their very first political campaign.

Throughout his career, he has interviewed several high-profile individuals, including Bill Clinton, Mikhail Gorbachev, Condoleezza Rice, Nancy Pelosi, George McGovern, Warren Buffett, Jerry Seinfeld, Oprah, and more.

In 2015, the Brodsky family established the Jeffrey H. Brodsky Oral History Award at Columbia. The award is given to "one or more students annually whose thesis makes an important contribution to knowledge and most exemplifies the rigor, creativity, and ethical integrity that OHMA teaches its students." In 2018, Brodsky and his father Howard created The Brodsky Prize, a college scholarship for New Hampshire high school students to encourage outof-the-box thinking and innovation by a new generation of student journalists.

At 36, while a student at Columbia, Brodsky was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a progressive disorder that affects the nervous system. He died on July 26, 2023. He was 49 years old.

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# **Content Description**

Jeffrey Brodsky (1974-2023) was an American journalist and oral historian. The collection includes photographs, video, news clippings, audio recordings, transcripts, notes, news clippings, and digital ephemera documenting his education and career.

The collection contains materials relating to his personal life and early career, including news clippings about his time as co-editor of his high school newspaper in New Hampshire, reference letters for internships, and personal photographs. Also included is text from an unpublished interview conducted by Brodsky's father, Howard Brodsky, with Jeff about his career, his life, and his desires for his legacy. Also included in this collection are audio files of 11 full episodes of a WGIR radio show called *Spotlight*, hosted by Brodsky and Misbah Tahrir, his frequent collaborator in high school. They were both co-editors of the high school newspaper, *The Little Green*.

The collection contains materials relating to his career as a journalist, including photographs and video clips from red carpets at a variety of events, including movie premieres, White House Correspondents' Association events, Clinton Global Initiative events, Gridiron Dinners, movie premieres, and more. Public figures such as Madonna, John Legend, Michael Moore, Howard Stern, Les Mooves, Donald Trump, Colin Powell, Nancy Pelosi, Condoleezza Rice, Bill Clinton, Chris Christie, Anthony Weiner, and more are represented in this collection.

This collection includes photographs and video clips from various events centered around business executives, including events for *Chief Executive* magazine and the CEO Breakfast Series at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire.

The collection includes a wealth of materials relating to his time as a student at Columbia University in the first cohort of the Oral History Master's program (OHMA), including materials related to his thesis project titled "My First Campaign," where he interviewed politicians about their very first political campaign. These materials include unedited transcripts, drafts of questions for narrators, notes on interviews, feedback from professors, edited and unedited video and audio files from interviews, and more. Brodsky later published excerpts from his thesis in a variety of publications, including The Washington Post and NPR; the collection contains materials relating to these publications, including edited audio and video as well as PDFs of the publications.

More than 2500 photographs were originally accessioned, which included several duplicated photographs. All duplicates have been weeded. The photographs were not organized, most were untitled, and there is little to no indication of who is represented in the photographs. The original metadata for the materials is not available, therefore there are no dates available. While many connections between photographs and events have already been established and are reflected in the arrangement, some photographs may be found to be from the same event or the same interview upon further examination by researchers.

This collection differs from other more traditional oral history collections held in the Oral History Archive at Columbia in several ways. The biggest difference is that this is truly a "work-in-progress" collection rather than a completed traditional collection. Most interviews do not have full transcripts, some transcripts just have the narrator's answer without the question listed. Some interviews have edited audio and video, some have neither. There will be no further processing of this collection, and no transcripts or other formats will be added.

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# Arrangement

This collection is arranged in four series.

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# Administrative Information

# **Publication Statement**

Oral History Archives at Columbia

# **Restrictions on Access**

Series IV.4 interviews are freely available on the Columbia Libraries' Digital Library Collections site via links in this finding aid. All other digital files can be accessed upon request via a secure laptop in the Rare Book & Manuscript Library's Reading Room.

# **Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

Reproductions may be made for research purposes. The Oral History Archive at Columbia maintains ownership of the physical material only. Copyright remains with the Brodsky family. The responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

# **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

2020-2021-OH001-DIG: Source of acquisition-Greg Brodsky. Method of acquisition: gift. Date of acquisition: April 2021.

# **Processing Information**

Materials processed by Chelsea Reil in 2023-2024.

Finding aid written by Chelsea Reil in March 2024.

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# **Related Materials**

# **Related Materials**

Jeff Brodsky's memorial website is archived and available at: <u>https://wayback.archive-it.org/2766/20240604200246/https://www.jeffbrodsky-memorial.com/</u>

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# **Controlled Access Headings**

• Oral history

# **Collection Inventory**

# Series I: Personal Materials, 1991-2021

## Scope and Contents

This series includes press clippings about Brodsky's work, screenshots of his appearances in various media outlets, solo photos of Brodsky, and professional papers like a resume and a letter of recommendation.

#### Title/Description

Instances

Professional Materials, 1991-2003

#### Scope and content

A letter of recommendation dated 1991 for Jeff Brodsky written by Basil Talbott, Washington correspondent for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and a cover letter and resume dated 2003 written by Brodsky.

Press Materials, 1992-2021

#### Scope and Contents

Various media coverage of Jeff's early work, including screenshots of articles, a text document with multiple articles pasted together, and a video clip of Brodsky's appearance on "Sonya Live." Also included is an interview conducted by Howard Brodsky with his son, and an article published in the *New Hampshire Union*  *Leader* about Jeff Brodsky and Howard Brodsky's relationship and philanthropic work from 2021.

Personal Photographs, undated

#### Scope and Contents

55 photographs, mostly solo shots of Brodsky from various events, inlcuding head shots.

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# Series II: Spotlight, 1992

#### Scope and Contents

This series contains 11 audio files of episodes of *Spotlight*, a radio show hosted by Brodsky and Misbah Tahir, his frequent collaborator in high school. *Spotlight* was a weekly talk-radio show that broadcast on WGIR, a commercial AM radio station based in Manchester, New Hampshire. Episodes are from 1992 and feature short interviews with New Hampshire politicians and government officials, often focusing on education policy.

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# Series III: Professional Works, undated

#### Scope and Contents

This series contains materials related to interviews conducted by Brodsky with various individuals. Materials are organized into two subseries related to the type of event they portray, including red carpet events and CEO events.

While many connections between interviews have already been established and are reflected in the arrangement, some materials in this series may be found to be from Brodsky's time at Columbia upon further examination by researchers. Because the original metadata was not transferred to the archive, it is difficult to determine exactly when and for what entity these interviews were conducted.

# Subseries III.1: Red Carpet, undated

#### **Scope and Contents**

This subseries holds all materials related to Brodsky's journalism work for events including movie premieres, White House Correspondents' Association events, Gridiron Dinners, Clinton Global Initiative events, TIME100 events, Grammy Awards parties, and more. Materials included in this series are screenshots of Brodsky interviewing individuals such as Henry Kissinger and G. Gordon Liddy on C-Span, video compilations of Brodsky interviewing individuals at various events, and over 500 photographs of Brodsky interviewing various high profile individuals. A small number of files were given descriptive titles before they arrived at the archive, so there is some information regarding individuals, events, and dates, for select photographs.

Title/Description

Instances

Photographs, undated

#### Scope and Contents

670 photographs from various red carpet events depicting Brodsky interviewing various celebrities and politicians. Individuals represented include: Anderson Cooper, Harvey Weinstein, Oprah, Wolf Blltzer, Arianna Huffington, Donald Trump, Michael Moore, Steven Spielberg, and more. Original metadata is unavailable, file names are not all accurate.

#### Video, undated

#### **Scope and Contents**

31 video files with descriptive titles from various events depicting Brodsky interviewing celebrities and politicians. Some events include White House Correspondents' Association events, Clinton Global Initiative events, movie premieres, Obama inauguration events, and more.

# Subseries III.2: CEO, undated

#### **Scope and Contents**

This subseries contains all materials related to Brodsky's work interviewing business executives. There are materials from several different events, including a dinner organized by *Chief Executive* magazine and events related to the CEO Breakfast Series at St. Anselm College in New Hampshire. Included in this series are video clips of interviews with various business executives conducted by Brodsky, photographs from various events, and drafts of questions for interviews.

#### Title/Description

Instances

Chief Executive Events, undated

#### Scope and Contents

Photographs, video, and text documents with notes for interviews at events hosted by *Chief Executive* magazine. Materials depict Brodsky interviewing various attendees. Notes contain drafts of questions for interviews.

#### CEO Breakfast, undated

#### Scope and Contents

Photographs depicting attendees at an event hosted by St. Anselm College's New Hampshire Institutue of Politics.

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# Series IV: Columbia University, 2008-2012

#### **Scope and Contents**

This series documents Brodsky's education at Columbia University as part of the Oral History Master of Arts inaugural cohort and his working process. Materials in this series include his application demo reel, coursework, materials related to his thesis, and photographs from Brodsky's graduation from in 2012.

## Subseries IV.1: Application Materials, undated

#### **Scope and Contents**

Four versions of Brodsky's professional highlight reel as part of his application materials to Columbia University's Oral History Master of Arts program.

Title/	Descr	int	ion
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Instances

Video, 2008, undated

#### Scope and Contents

Four different versions of Brodsky's interview reel, produced as application materials for Columbia University's Oral History Master of Arts program.

# Subseries IV.2: Other Coursework, 2008, undated

#### **Scope and Contents**

Materials from Brodsky's time as a student at Columbia University that could not be linked to another project. Materials include an audio file containing an interview with Scott Burkhardt about President Obama's election in 2008, an audio file containing an interview with an unidentified Associated Press journalist about the nature of entertainment journalism, and several files relating to audio settings and system preferences, including audio files for testing sound levels.

#### Title/Description

Instances

Scott Burkhardt, 2008

#### Scope and Contents

One audio file containing an interview with filmmaker Scott Burkhardt on November 5, 2008 discussing the election of President Obama.

## Audio Levels, undated

#### **Scope and Contents**

One audio interview with an unidentified journalist and related files, including audio testing files, a screenshot of audio levels in garage Band, and other metadata files for setting preferences.

#### Subseries IV.3: White House Correspondents, 2008-2009

#### **Scope and Contents**

Project materials for an unfinished oral history project surrounding White House press correspondents. This project was ultimately left unfinished when Brodsky settled on his thesis topic covered in My First Campaign.

#### Title/Description

Instances

Individuals, 2008-2009

#### Scope and Content

Materials related to individual interviews for Brodsky's unfinished oral history project examining White House press correspondents. Individuals represented here include Sam Donaldson, Peter Kann, Bob Shieffer, and Richard Wald.

#### Video, 2008-2009

#### Scope and Content

3 video files depicting Brosdky's work in Washington D.C. interviewing Sam Donaldson and Ann Compton and touring the White House press briefing room.

# Subseries IV.4: My First Campaign, 2010-2012, undated

#### Scope and Contents

Materials in this sub-series relate to Brodsky's thesis project titled "My First Campaign," in which he interviewed dozens of current and former elected officials about their very first campaign. Materials have been arranged by interviewee, and all related materials are grouped together. There are preinterview recordings, unedited audio and video of the interviews, photographs taken during the interviews, multiple drafts of transcripts, notes indicating follow up questions for future interview sessions, and supporting materials including ending clips, multiple title scene options, etc. Please note, many duplicated photographs were weeded from this series.

Some interviews have full transcripts, some have transcripts with only the answers transcribed and not the questions, some have excerpts, some have different versions of the same transcript, some have a combination of variations. Any transcripts marked "final" (Slade Gorton, George Pataki, John Engler) were originally described that way by Brodsky. Some interviews have the same audio or video multiple times, but with different file formats (see Mitch Daniels, Gary Hart, Olusegun Obasanjo, Richard Thornburgh, Donald Rumsfeld, Alejandro Toledo, Martín Torrijos). These were kept in the collection to highlight the variety of file formats used at this time and also to illustrate how a working oral historian saved and described material. These files are listed as "audio alternative format" or "video alternative format."

Brodsky sometimes conducted interviews over the phone or conducted a pre-interview phone call. These recordings are listed as "phone call" (see Birch Bayh, Chris Christie). He also often had multiple camera angles for each interview. While the exact type of equipment he used is unknown, he does make mention of a Flip Video camera (see James Florio), and you can see the setup of his equipment in certain videos and photos (see Mary Landrieu, Hilda Solis, Dick Gephardt, Joe Lieberman).

This project was not without the usual technical difficulties from this time period. See Richard Thornburgh video for an example of a recorded video with no sound. One alternative camera angle video file for Donald Rumsfeld was corrupted and was removed from the collection. Generally, as with all OHAC collections, "audio part 1" will line up with "video part 1," "audio part 2" with "video part 2," and so on. It is a less than perfect match with this collection, because the audio files were captured independently from the video files, instead of the audio files being extracted from the video files.

Due to missing most of the original metadata, it is difficult to determine what interviews were conducted specifically for Brodsky's work on his thesis at Columbia and interviews conducted for other purposes, either at Columbia or outside of it. It is possible that some interviews in this series were conducted while he was a student at Columbia but not specifically intended to be used for his thesis, or they were conducted at some point after his studies.

The description of this sub-series is meant to highlight the very "in progress" nature of the work. This is not a traditional oral history collection that contains neatly edited and formatted transcripts. These are the working files of an oral historian from the early 2010s, and the materials are meant to reflect that.

Title/Description	Instances
Individuals, 2010-2012, undated	
Scope and Contents	
All materials related to individual interviews for Brodsky's Columbia thesis project titled "My First Campaign." Materials are grouped by interviewee. There are pre-interview recordings, unedited audio and video of the interviews, photographs taken during the interviews, multiple drafts of transcripts, notes indicating follow up questions for future interview sessions, and supporting materials including ending clips, multiple title scene options, etc. Many transcripts have only the narrator's answers, but not the interviewer's question transcribed. Please note, many duplicated photographs were weeded.	
Gerry Adams, 2010 September 23	
Digital Object: Gerry Adams, 2010 September 23	
José María Aznar, 2010 November 18	
Digital Object: José María Aznar, 2010 November 18	
Marion Barry, 2010 October 19	
Digital Object: Marion Barry, 2010 October 19	
Birch Bayh, undated	
Digital Object: Birch Bayh, undated	
Matt Blunt, undated	
Digital Object: Matt Blunt, undated	
Kjell Magne Bondevik, 2010 September 21	
<u>Digital Object</u> : <u>Kjell Magne Bondevik, 2010 September</u> <u>21</u>	
Cory Booker, undated	

5	5
Digital Object: Cory Booker, undated	
George H. W. Bush, undated	
Digital Object: George H. W. Bush, undated	
Patricia Bynes, undated	
Digital Object: Patricia Bynes, undated	
Chris Christie, undated	
Digital Object: Chris Christie, undated	
Thad Cochran, undated	
Digital Object: Thad Cochran, undated	
John Conyers, undated	
Digital Object: John Conyers, undated	
Richard Daley, undated	
Digital Object: Richard Daley, undated	
Mitch Daniels, undated	
Digital Object: Mitch Daniels, undated	
Tom Daschle, undated	
Digital Object: Tom Daschle, undated	
David Dinkins, 2010 September 16	
Digital Object: David Dinkins, 2010 Septemb	<u>ver 16</u>
Chris Dodd, undated	
Digital Object: Chris Dodd, undated	
Michael Dukakis, 2010 September 29	
Digital Object: Michael Dukakis, 2010 Septer	<u>nber 29</u>
John Engler, undated	
Digital Object: John Engler, undated	
Walter Fauntroy, 2010 November 19	
Digital Object: Walter Fauntroy, 2010 Nover	nber 19
James Florio, 2010 October 7	
Digital Object: James Florio, 2010 October 7	
Ray Flynn, 2010 September 27	
Digital Object: Ray Flynn, 2010 September 2	<u>:7</u>
Tom Foley, 2010 November 20	
Digital Object: Tom Foley, 2010 November 2	<u>!0</u>
Dick Gephardt, undated	

Dick Gephardt, undated

Digital Object: Dick Gephardt, undated
Slade Gorton, undated
Digital Object: Slade Gorton, undated
Gary Hart, undated
Digital Object: Gary Hart, undated
Steny Hoyer, undated
Digital Object: Steny Hoyer, undated
Jon Huntsman, undated
Digital Object: Jon Huntsman, undated
Jesse Jackson, 2010 September 22
Digital Object: Jesse Jackson, 2010 September 22
Patrick Kennedy, unknown
Digital Object: Patrick Kennedy, unknown
Wim Kok, 2010 September 23
Digital Object: Wim Kok, 2010 September 23
Steve Kroft, undated
Digital Object: Steve Kroft, undated
Dennis Kucinich, undated
Digital Object: Dennis Kucinich, undated
Mary Landrieu, undated
Digital Object: Mary Landrieu, undated
Carl Levin, undated
Digital Object: Carl Levin, undated
Joe Lieberman, undated
Digital Object: Joe Lieberman, undated
Trent Lott, undated
Digital Object: Trent Lott, undated
John Lynch, undated
Digital Object: John Lynch, undated
Bob McDonnell, undated
Digital Object: Bob McDonnell, undated
George McGovern, undated
Digital Object: George McGovern, undated

Thomas Menino, undated

	Jenney II. brodsky oral history conection 15456592
Digital Object: Thomas M	<u>Menino, undated</u>
Gifford Miller, 2010 Nove	ember 10
Digital Object: Gifford M	liller, 2010 November 10
Ruth Ann Minner, 2010 C	October 18
Digital Object: Ruth Ann	Minner, 2010 October 18
Jerrold Nadler, undated	
Digital Object: Jerrold N	adler, undated
Janet Napolitano, undated	d
Digital Object: Janet Nar	<u>politano, undated</u>
Gavin Newsom, undated	
Digital Object: Gavin Net	wsom, undated
Martin O'Malley, undated	
Digital Object: Martin O	Malley, undated
Olusegun Obasanjo, unda	
Digital Object: Olusegun	Obasanjo, undated
Andrés Pastrana Arango,	-
<u>Digital Object</u> : <u>Andrés Pa</u> <u>September 23</u>	astrana Arango, 2010
George Pataki, undated	
Digital Object: George Pa	ataki, undated
Sharon Pratt, 2010 Octob	er 21
Digital Object: Sharon Pr	ratt, 2010 October 21
Dan Quayle, undated	
Digital Object: Dan Quay	<u>/le, undated</u>
Charles Rangel, undated	
Digital Object: Charles R	angel, undated
Bill Richardson, undated	
Digital Object: Bill Richa	urdson, undated
Mary Robinson, 2010 Dec	cember 16
Digital Object: Mary Rob	binson, 2010 December 16
Roy Romer, 2010 Decemb	per 6
Digital Object: Roy Rom	<u>er, 2010 December 6</u>
Mike Ross, 2010 Septemb	per 30
Digital Object: Mike Ros	s, 2010 September 30
Donald Rumsfeld, undate	d

Jenney II. Drodský oral history concertoir 15450572
Digital Object: Donald Rumsfeld, undated
Jorge Sampaio, 2010 September 23
Digital Object: Jorge Sampaio, 2010 September 23
Richard Shelby, undated
Digital Object: Richard Shelby, undated
Jenny Shipley, undated
Digital Object: Jenny Shipley, undated
Hilda Solis, undated
Digital Object: Hilda Solis, undated
Eliot Spitzer, undated
Digital Object: Eliot Spitzer, undated
Richard Thornburgh, 2010 October 19
Digital Object: Richard Thornburgh, 2010 October 19
Alejandro Toledo, undated
Digital Object: Alejandro Toledo, undated
Martín Torrijos, undated
Digital Object: Martín Torrijos, undated
Peter Vallone, 2010 October 14
Digital Object: Peter Vallone, 2010 October 14
John Warner, undated
Digital Object: John Warner, undated
Christine Todd Whitman, undated
Digital Object: Christine Todd Whitman, undated
Jim Wright, 2011 June 10
Digital Object: Jim Wright, 2011 June 10
Ron Wyden, undated
Digital Object: Ron Wyden, undated
Supporting Materials, undated
Scope and Contents
Materials include video files of different versions of a title scene, ending clips, and compilations.

Press Coverage, 2012

# Scope and Contents

Materials include all press coverage of Brodsky's oral history thesis titled "My First Campaign."

Excerpts of these interviews were featured in *The Washington Post* and National Public Radio (NPR). This series holds all materials related to Brodsky's published work in *The Washington Post*, including selected excerpts from interviews, notes, and drafts of the lede and captions. This follows the original arrangement of this material. Also found in this series is a audio and a transcript of an interview he conducted with Michel Martin of Tell Me More on NPR News about his work, as well as photographs from his interview.

# Subseries IV.5: Graduation, 2012 May 16

#### Scope and Contents

Photographs and one video file from Brodsky's graduation from Columbia in May 2012.

Title/Description

Instances

Graduation materials, 2012

## **Scope and Contents**

130 photographs and one video file from Brodsky's May 2012 graduation from Columbia University.

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